



An open letter to the groceries industry

Re: Threat to supply for rural Community Shops

Despite being in the midst of the most unprecedented of times, rural community shops are stepping up to serve their communities, including the elderly and most vulnerable members of our society. This is why we have been alarmed to hear from our network of over 400 rural community shop members throughout the UK that they are concerned about being disadvantaged in terms of fair supply distribution. I am writing today raise awareness amongst the groceries industry and national suppliers and wholesalers to ask for your support to ensure that this is not, and will not become, the case.

Community businesses have always played a vital role in supporting the most vulnerable members of their communities and at this time they are true lifelines. It is vital that we all support these businesses to ensure that their supply chains are maintained, and the flow of essential groceries and goods are reaching those most in need. At a time when so many elderly - or local residents with underlying health issues - are forced to self-isolate, unnecessary travel to larger supermarkets for supplies will put lives at risk.

Our members rely on national suppliers such as yours, and therefore we urge you recognise the unique role that small rural shops and businesses are playing in this crisis, and that they do not lose out to bigger supermarkets or chains with greater buying power.

We ask you to consider introducing special measures for rural community shops to help them maintain their stock levels of essential goods such as:

- **reduced minimum orders,**
- **priority deliveries to rural and more isolated community shops,**
- **smaller, more frequent deliveries,**
- **implementation of rules in cash and carry stores to prevent panic buying and unfair distribution of stock.**

It is the request of the government that the groceries industry work in partnership with them and local government, local resilience and emergency partners on a new Local Support System to ensure vulnerable people will receive basic groceries. Community shops are uniquely positioned to serve and protect their most vulnerable customers, and they need your support to ensure that they can continue to do so.

James Alcock

Chief Executive, Plunkett Foundation